



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

ICE LAUNCHES OPERATION COMMUNITY SHIELD, ARRESTS 103 MS-13 GANG MEMBERS IN SIX MAJOR U.S. CITIES *17 MS-13 Members Arrested in Los Angeles as Part of New National Crackdown*

LOS ANGELES – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) today announced the arrest of 103 members of the violent street gang Mara Salvatrucha 13 (MS-13) in six major U.S. cities as part of a new anti-gang initiative called “Operation Community Shield.”

Late last month, teams of ICE agents working with their federal, state, and local counterparts in the Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, New York, Newark, and Miami metropolitan areas, began arresting MS-13 gang members on a range of criminal and /or administrative charges.

The 103 individuals arrested to date are accused of, or have already been convicted for, a wide variety of crimes that include murder, assault, narcotics violations, re-entering the United States after deportation, and being in the United States illegally.

So far, ICE agents in Los Angeles have arrested 17 foreign nationals with ties to MS-13, including a gang leader who was implicated, but never charged, in a plot to assassinate a local police officer. ICE agents lodged an immigration detainer against the 24-year-old Salvadoran national shortly after his arrest by the Los Angeles Police Department Saturday night. ICE agents believe the man, who arrived in the United States last year, came to Los Angeles to serve as leader of the so-called Francis Clique, one of the MS-13 sub-groups operating in the city’s Wilshire district. The suspect has been booked on local charges, but the detainer ensures he will be turned over to ICE as soon as that case is completed.

Others arrested locally during the ongoing operation include a 30-year-old Mexican man with a prior conviction for attempted murder. That individual, who was deported in 2001 after serving a nine-year prison term, is suspected of being an organizer for younger MS-13 members.

“Many of these gangs, like MS-13, began here and are deeply entrenched,” said Loraine Brown, special agent-in-charge for ICE investigations in Los Angeles. “But we will not let that deter us. Working with our law enforcement counterparts, we are going to use every tool at our disposal to take these criminals off the streets and break the cycle of gang-related violence that is threatening the safety of our communities.”

Operation Community Shield is a nationwide ICE anti-gang initiative designed to disrupt, dismantle, and prosecute violent gang members and their organizations by employing the full range of authorities and investigative tools available to ICE. Under this initiative, ICE is using its broad immigration authorities (both criminal and administrative) against gang members, as well as its customs authorities in targeting narcotics smuggling, money laundering, and in seeking the forfeiture of assets.

This initiative also involves strong partnerships and cooperation with existing federal, state, and local anti-gang efforts. Such partnerships are essential to the success of the initiative and to ensure officer safety during operations. Locally, ICE is working closely with the California Department of Justice and is receiving gang-related intelligence from many area police departments.

Additionally, ICE will be working through its 54 attaché offices overseas to cooperate with foreign governments that are also experiencing gang problems, particularly those in Central America.

The initial target of Operation Community Shield is MS-13, which is one of the largest and most violent street gangs in the United States. The majority of MS-13 members are foreign nationals in this country illegally, making them subject to ICE's criminal and administrative immigration authorities. ICE plans to use these immigration tools to arrest, prosecute, and where appropriate, remove these individuals from the United States. ICE coordinates all deportations with the foreign nations receiving these individuals.

At the same time, many MS-13 members derive income from the sale of illegal drugs and other contraband, making them subject to ICE's counter-drug, financial, and other investigative authorities. Seizure and forfeiture of funds, property, and other illegally-derived assets will be another component of the initiative.

Over the coming months, ICE will be using all these tools in a combined fashion with the ultimate goal of crippling MS-13 organizations across the country. Ultimately, Operation Community Shield will also target other violent street gangs.

Editor's Note: ICE b-roll of several of this week's gang arrests is being made available through both a national and local video feed. The national feed, featuring video shot at several locations nationwide including Los Angeles, is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. (PST). The satellite coordinates are: Galaxy 3C, 95° West, C-Band, Analog; Transponder 6, Vertical; Downlink Frequency: 3820 MHz

In addition to the national feed, b-roll of the Los Angeles area gang arrests is also being made available on TELCO under a prior arrangement with KTTV Fox 11 News. The feed is scheduled for 2:00 p.m. (PST). Watch City News Service for an advisory later this morning with more details.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.